

Caribbean Business & Travel



FROM CRISIS TO OPPORTUNITY

AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO
FOOD SECURITY IN THE
CARIBBEAN REGION

February 2023



H.E. Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali
President of Guyana
with responsibility for agriculture
in the Quasi Cabinet of CARICOM





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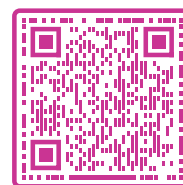
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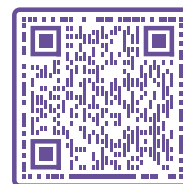
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President Irfaan Ali's Book
"From Crisis to Opportunity"

Guyana Shade House
and Coconuts

Volume 4, 2024



Editorial

Concerns about the Caribbean's massive food import bill have been highlighted and discussed for decades. It was initially known as the Regional Food plan, then evolved into a Food and Nutrition Strategy, and then stalled for years.

The 25% by 2025 CARICOM Food Security Initiative, spearheaded by Guyana's President Irfaan Ali and with Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley as the other key advocate for slashing the U.S. 6 billion dollars of food imports into the region, has breathed fresh life into the regional integration movement.

We are pleased to provide an in-depth report on the journey so far to reaching the 25% reduction in the food import bill by 2025, and the myriad investment opportunities as the region ramps up food production and agricultural exports.

The 2024 edition also throws the spotlight on the new Secretary-General of the Caribbean Tourism Organization, Dona Regis-Prosper, who shares the CTO's priorities and her vision for the regional tourism development agency.

Another Barbados-based Caribbean agency leader, Dr. Damie Sinanan, the new Executive Director of the Caribbean Export Development Agency, identifies the main focus under his leadership.

In keeping with our mandate to promote the region's manufacturing sector and feature a Caribbean manufacturing leader, we profile the President of the Barbados Manufacturers Association (BMA), Rakeesh Bernard.

As always, we promote the annual Caribbean Hotel Investment Conference and Operations Summit (CHICOS), which is being held in Barbados this year, and the Barbados Food and Rum Festival. For our Destination Focus, we take you to Barbados and The Bahamas.

Two special publications are also featured in this edition – the 2024 Caribbean Tourism and Hospitality Investment Guide and my book "Caribbean Perspectives", which covers 34 years of CARICOM and economic and social issues in the region.

This year, we are promoting conference and events facilities in selected Caribbean countries and, as always, we have the highlights of the CTO's Caribbean Week.

We hope this edition encourages some of our readers to take advantage of the significant business opportunities identified and inspires you to visit one or more of our distinctive and diverse tourism destinations.



Publisher and Editor

Sandra Ann Baptiste

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Caribbean Food Security Report and Investment Opportunities



CARICOM Reports Significant Progress on Regional Food Security Initiative

The 25% by 2025 initiative, a concerted effort to put food security and improved food systems on the front burner to foster investment, economic development and prosperity for the CARICOM region, is on track to achieve its goals.

According to CARICOM Secretary-General, Dr. Carla Barnett, the vision of the CARICOM Region is for a climate-smart, sustainable food system that will support the priority objective of achieving food and nutrition security for our citizens.

"CARICOM has been making commendable advancements in innovation and policy reform in agriculture. These gains contribute to the Region's appeal as a preferred option for Investments. Mobilization of capital will allow our vulnerable economies to increase productivity, enhance resilience to climate change with appropriate technologies, and transport our produce throughout the Region," Dr. Barnett said.

CARICOM member states, which are highly dependent on wheat, dairy products and processed foods, agreed in 2022 to significantly cut the massive U.S. 6-billion-dollar food import bill.

"It's a game changer. It's a vision and strategy that has been gaining steam and we are seeing investments on the ground and commitment from governments at levels we have never seen before," Shaun Baugh, Programme Manager, Agricultural & Agro-Industrial Development at the Georgetown-based CARICOM Secretariat, told Caribbean Business and Travel.

With the exception of Guyana and Belize, the region is a net importer of food and at least seven countries import more than 80% of the food they consume.

Guyana's President Irfaan Ali, the lead CARICOM Head of Government with responsibility for Agriculture and Food Security, is the architect of this Initiative. His book "From Crisis to Opportunity: An Innovative Approach to Food Security in the Caribbean Region" identifies the challenges and opportunities in each Member State and the strategies the region needs to implement to be more self-sufficient and stem the outflow of critical foreign exchange.

A special Ministerial Task Force, headed by Guyana's Minister of Agriculture, Zulfikar Mustapha, which has been meeting monthly to ensure the project is on track to achieve its goal in 2025, is seeing very encouraging results.

Baugh observed that Latin America and the Caribbean are the only regions globally that are improving their food security status.

The CARICOM Secretariat has listed the intensification and domestic production programmes across Member States, including an expansion of corn and Soybean production in Guyana, and self-sufficiency of onion production in Jamaica and white potatoes in Dominica, as positive developments to date. There is also an increase in vegetable, shrimp and chicken production in Guyana and Barbados.

There have also been numerous collaborative ventures. Belize is exporting soya bean meal to Trinidad and Tobago while Suriname



Dr. Carla Barnett
CARICOM Secretary-General



Shaun Baugh
Program Manager
Agricultural and Agro-Industrial
Development

is supplying 1,000 tonnes of fresh produce to Barbados weekly.

Work is advancing on the regional ferry service, expected to be launched by year end and construction is progressing on Food Terminals to facilitate exports in Guyana and Barbados.

The CARICOM Program Manager said the 25% by 2025 initiative has created a long-term economic and social partnership among stakeholders – governments, the private sector led by the CARICOM Private Sector Organisation (CPSO), civil society, farmers and producers associations. Also supporting the project are international organisations such as the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation in Agriculture (IICA).

"It is unique in that it is the first time in many years that all stakeholders are on board and actively supporting the vision."

The CARICOM Secretariat is addressing five strategic areas of focus – the removal of Non-Tariff Barriers, derisking the agriculture sector, cross-border investment, digitalization of the sector and the Rules of Origin that determine the country of origin of goods, services, or investments.

"I am seeing progress in all of these areas," Baugh reported. He added that the region is also buoyed by the significant GDP growth in Guyana and the consequent business opportunities there.

According to Baugh, many of the Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) which had been a big hindrance to intra-regional trade for years, have been reduced due to the introduction of new policies. In particular, the introduction of an alternate Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) dispute mechanism, which addresses issues related to phytosanitary concerns, is a "softer approach" to remove any friction that may exist among member states.

He also pointed to the Plant Health Directors Forum and noted that Chief Veterinary Officers from around the region meet regularly.

The derisking of the sector is another positive development. CARICOM along with a key private sector partner Lynch Caribbean, recently launched the Regional Economic Agricultural Insurance Programme (REAP) to protect against 'unpredictable and devastating' climate change impacts on the sector.

Regarding joint ventures, Baugh said the regional ferry service involving Guyana, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, will be critical for the movement of produce among those member states. He noted that concurrent with the improved logistics, will be improved port facilities and the nearby food terminals to house produce and package food.

Baugh reported that work has been ongoing in several countries to introduce new technology to improve data analysis of agricultural production.

Moreover, all member countries have now signed the Regional Agricultural Health and Food Safety Policy that

covers regulations related to labelling and listing of ingredients.

There is also agreement on the ground rules for trade in animal products, which now have clear protocols, and 19 guidelines have been approved for trade in agricultural commodities.

Baugh said Guyana is continuing to expand production of several products including vegetables, shrimp, beef and mutton while in Barbados production of vegetables is up.

CARICOM Members such as Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Grenada, St. Lucia and Montserrat are focusing on the production of niche vegetables, infrastructure development through innovation and new technologies.

Baugh noted that USAID is funding the Caribbean Agricultural Productivity Improvement Activity (CAPA), a three-year programme designed to improve food security and promote sustainable farming practices, while the European Union is providing financing for a range of food security projects, including improving data collection.

He noted that the regional private sector body, CPSO, has done analysis and case studies and identified 19 projects ripe for investment namely for poultry meat, hatching eggs, beef, pork and mutton, corn, rice, niche vegetables, cassava and coconut products.

Baugh said investment opportunities for the larger CARICOM countries – Guyana, Belize, Jamaica and Suriname – will focus mainly on the production of corn, soy, livestock and fruits while Barbados and St. Kitts and Nevis want capital to boost production of specific fruits and vegetables such as broccoli.

He suggested that there should be a significant increase in regional exports of ackee and sweet potatoes to fulfill diaspora needs in North America.

"I have never seen the region so excited about a food security project. There is a level of patriotism and commitment that I have not seen before. There is a high level of collaboration and unity among member states," Baugh commented.



Guyana's President Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali and Barbados Prime Minister Mia Amor Mottley on a tour of Guyana's Agriculture Innovative and Entrepreneurship Programme at Mon Repos.

CARICOM Task Force Chairman Optimistic about Reduction in Food Import Bill by 2025

The Chairman of the CARICOM Ministerial Task Force on the 25% by 2025 food security initiative, Zulfikar Mustapha, says there is remarkable progress as several countries, especially Guyana, have been ramping up agricultural production and exports.

“From 2020 to now I have seen the Heads of government displaying the political will to reduce the food import bill, driven by the leadership of President Irfaan Ali,” Mustapha, Guyana’s Minister of Agriculture, told Caribbean Business & Travel.

He reported that for 2023 the region’s food import bill has been slashed by 12 percent. This result was strongly influenced by initiatives promoted by the Ministerial Task Force. “I am optimistic that by the end of 2025 we will have reduced the region’s food import bill by 25 percent or surpass that goal,” Mustapha declared.

President Ali stated after the July CARICOM Heads of Government Conference in Grenada, that he is confident that the investments in agriculture, policy formulation and the dedication of CARICOM Heads of Government, will lead to success in cutting the region’s exorbitant food import bill. “Notwithstanding the challenges we will be successful in reducing that food import bill and expanding our production,” the Guyanese leader said.

Minister Mustapha said the U.S. \$14-million-dollar Guyana food terminal at Yarrowkabra, on the Linden-Soesdyke highway, is scheduled to be completed mid-2025. Several phases of the project have started and contracts have been awarded.

The Food Hub will accommodate 40 containers of produce that will be transported to Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago. In addition, an

MOU will be done with Roraima to send produce to the neighbouring Brazilian city.

“We have started to ramp up production to ensure when the terminal is completed we have produce to export. We also will be exporting value-added agro-processed products from nearby plants,” the Minister stated. Thirteen agro-processing facilities across the country have been established by the government as part of this initiative.

Mustapha said Guyana is aiming to be self-sufficient in corn and soya and to be a net exporter for the Caribbean. Production, which is expected to increase from 12,000 this year to 25,000 tonnes in 2025, is being attributed to the upsurge in production by four large investors, including Tacama Gold in the Intermediate Savannahs.

On livestock production, he commented that 100 farmers have started receiving some of the initial stock of 750 Barbados black belly sheep. Eighty farmers have been allocated breeding ramps for sheep production. In 2024, 28,920 acres of pasture were developed in areas such as Left Bank Abary, Ellis and Kookrit Savannahs.

Noting that Guyana now has a state-of-the-art Guy\$ 600-million-dollar abattoir at Onverwagt, in the Mahaica-Berbice area, the Minister said there are investment opportunities to expand beef production. New breeding animals were bought in from Texas, new embryo transplants have been acquired from Brazil and there has been an increase in the artificial insemination program.

Mustapha said due to better breeding animals and collaboration with the Swine Producers Association, pig



Zulfikar Mustapha
Minister of Agriculture

production has also increased.

The Minister noted that Demerara Distillers Ltd (DDL) is investing U.S. \$ 20 million in a dairy farm at Moblissa on the Linden-Soesdyke highway, which will become operational in 2025.

He also pointed to significant progress in expanding Aquaculture production. Brackish water shrimp production has grown from 10,000 kg in 2021 to 110,000 kg monthly, with earnings in 2023 totaling Guy \$ 3.8 billion.

At Onverwagt on the West Coast of Berbice, prawns are being produced. Annual production is estimated at 360 tonnes per year, which will provide earnings of U.S\$ 6.5 million. A shrimp hatchery will be set up at Mon Repos and a pilot program for marine cages has been started at Mainstay, Capoey and Mashabo.

Mustapha said there has been a sizeable increase in vegetables produced. In 2022, production totalled 330,449 metric tonnes compared to 340,643 in 2023 and from January to June 2024 182,238 metric tonnes were produced.

Fruit production has increased from 197,877 metric tonnes in 2022 to 205,658 last year and for the first half of this year 104,899 tonnes were grown.

The CARICOM Ministerial Task Force Chairman has had discussions with the private sector in Barbados, which wants to import from Guyana a lot more of their fruits and vegetables they are currently sourcing from Latin America, especially pineapples and oranges.

Mustapha said at Canal on the West Bank where there used to be cane lands, farmers are now doing large-scale pineapple production and there are good prospects for investment for this fruit as well as for broccoli, cauliflower and lettuce.

Another project is expected to result in a sharp reduction in the huge amounts of red beans and black eye beans imported into the Caribbean. “We have two main investors who are investing in the Tacama area. We are putting down a silo there and building the road to accommodate this project. By mid-next year, we will be producing all the blackeye peas and red beans for the Caribbean.”

The Regional Task Force Chairman said between 2020 and the first quarter of 2024, 6,000 acres of coconuts have been cultivated and the Brazilian Green Dwarf has been imported because this specie, which has a high water content, can be cultivated.

Coconuts accounted for 57.1 percent of the increase in production of non-traditional agricultural products last year. Guyana exported 9,107 metric tonnes of coconuts, water, copra and refined coconut oil providing revenue of Guy \$1.5 billion. Exports went to the Dominican Republic, the U.S., Barbados, Antigua and Barbuda and Suriname.

Mustapha disclosed that two specialists from India have been retained to advise on alternate production methods and growing coconuts near riverain areas such as the banks of the Berbice river and in the Pomeroon.



President Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali and Agriculture Minister Zulfikar Mustapha during a visit to the Victoria Greens Hydroponic Farm at Mon Repos.

Due to a new variety being used, cassava production has moved from an average of 18 tonnes per hectare to 30 tonnes over the past two years and work has begun on a project to build a cassava mill to produce cassava flour. It is likely to be set up on the West Coast in Region 3.

The Minister said Guyana is continuing to provide technical assistance and seeds to Trinidad and Tobago to boost rice production, which has increased from 1,000 acres to approximately 4,000 acres.

“Our technical teams were also in Barbados for a few weeks helping that country to increase their shrimp, and fruit and vegetable production, and to help them with the Shade Houses.”

Mustapha said the weekly regional ferry service is expected to start by end of 2024 “Initially, there will be 10 40-foot containers, each with a maximum of 12 tonnes of produce going to Barbados and Trinidad. There will also be a passenger service.”

The Minister said he had discussions with the management of Suriname Airways about sending more produce by air to Barbados. “It has started in limited amounts but I am looking to export large-scale using the Suriname airline so we are connecting

interested farmers who want to export to Barbados with airline officials to discuss the cargo rates.”

Guyana is revamping its Food Safety Bill, which will then be replicated around the Caribbean. “It is being amended to remove punitive measures affecting small producers. All laws and agencies that are involved in food safety will come under a new Food Safety Authority that will operate under the Ministry of Agriculture. A building is being constructed at LBI to house the Authority and a lab to do testing is being set up at the former Guysuco compound.

“Guyana is leading the Caribbean in the food production drive. Technical teams came to Guyana from Barbados and Trinidad and my counterpart from St. Lucia was also here to observe Guyana’s agricultural production best practices,” Mustapha said.

Caribbean Food Security Reports compiled by Ralph Seeram, Communications Specialist.



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GO-Invest Driving Change and Facilitating Investments to Boost Food Production

The Guyana Office for Investment (GO-Invest) is playing a pivotal role in the 25 % by 2025 initiative to reduce the region's food import bill as the agency not just facilitates investment but sees itself as a driver of change, working closely with both domestic and international partners to identify opportunities, streamline processes, and ensure that projects align with national development goals.

According to Guyana's Chief Investment Officer, Dr. Peter Ramsaroop, Guyana's leadership in producing food locally and sustainably serves as a model for the region. "The country's ability to attract significant investments in agriculture is no accident. It is the result of a deliberate strategy to create a welcoming and supportive investment climate, backed by generous incentives and a clear commitment to sustainable growth."

Noting that the country offers vast arable lands, abundant fresh water and a business-friendly environment, Dr. Ramsaroop said GO-Invest is at the forefront of the mission to boost food production, channeling investments into key agricultural sectors, fostering innovation, and ensuring that Guyana's vast potential is realised.

The Agency Head pointed to significant incentives for investors, including waivers on import duties and VAT on machinery and equipment, tax concessions on facilities like processing plants, cold storage, large-scale farming, as well as tax-deductible allowances for expenditures on development and cultivation.

"Guyana is already a net exporter of rice and sugar, and with continued

investment, the country is poised to expand its export footprint even further, particularly in high-demand areas such as vegetables, roots, and livestock feed," Dr. Ramsaroop said.

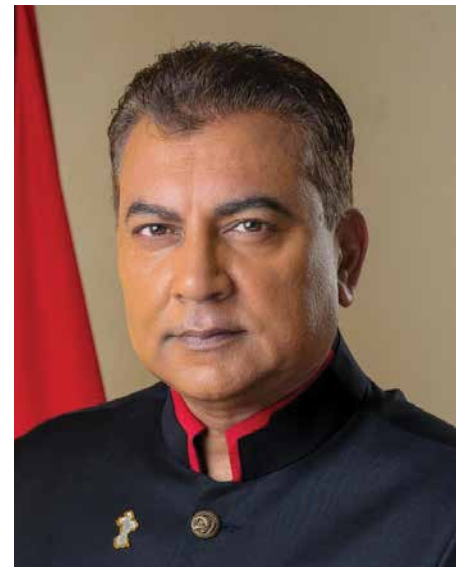
For crops there are Investment opportunities for producing cocoa and coffee, hemp, millet, cut flowers and spices such as ginger, black pepper, turmeric, nutmeg and cinnamon. Investment opportunities are also available for dehydrated fruits and vegetables, seasonings and spices, sauces and achars, flour and porridge mixes, coconut products and fruit juices.

GO-Invest recently facilitated an agreement with Demerara Dairy Inc. to establish a U.S. \$20 million state-of-the-art dairy farm and milk processing facility, a significant move to reduce dependency on dairy imports.

The agency also reported that the Guyana's poultry industry is seeing substantial growth and investment. Guyana Stockfeeds is developing an advanced poultry processing facility at Farm on the East Bank, while Royal Chicken is expanding its operations to enhance production and storage capacity, including a new processing plant at its Garden of Eden location.

Vilvoorden Inc, on the Essequibo Coast is undertaking a significant expansion of its rice production facility. "These billion-dollar investments not only support domestic food security but also offer opportunities for export as production increases," Dr. Ramsaroop stated.

GO-Invest has identified opportunities to develop a commercial-scale aquaculture sector to supply potential markets in the U.S., Mexico and



Dr. Peter Ramsaroop
Chief Investment Officer of Guyana

the European Union. Investment is needed for a Shrimp Hatchery Facility, Fish and Shrimp Processing and Feed Production Facilities.

For potential investors interested in large-scale farming, agro-processing, or eco-friendly technologies, GO-Invest offers expertise, support, and incentives needed to bring projects to fruition. The agency not only guides investors through the regulatory landscape but also offers support throughout the project lifecycle.

"GO-Invest ensures that every investment contributes to the broader goal of economic diversification and food security. The agency's efforts are focused on creating sustainable, long-term growth that benefits not only the investors but also the people of Guyana. Together, we can build a future where Guyana not only feeds the Caribbean but leads the way in sustainable agri-business," the Chief investment Officer said.

Barbados Food Security Initiatives on Track to Reduce Import Bill

The Barbados government is ramping up production of 12 crops and working to complete the food terminal to house and facilitate local and regional agricultural exports, as it keeps on track to improve food security and reduce the island's food import bill.

Minister of Agriculture, Food and Nutritional Security Indar Weir said the island's food security priorities are to increase crop production in collaboration with the International Food Science Centre (IFSC) and to establish the food terminal so Barbados can be a hub for exporting to CARICOM and international markets.

As part of the Food Security Initiative to cut imports, the Ministry is focused on increasing the production of broccoli, onions, carrots, lettuce, cabbage, sweet pepper, tomato, watermelons, pumpkin, cauliflower, celery and cantaloupes.

Export earnings from vegetables more than doubled from 2021 to 2023, from Bds \$5.4 to Bds \$11.6 million, according to Export Barbados.

The Minister said Barbados is also expanding production of the local black belly lamb to cut imports of New Zealand lamb.

In addition to significantly increasing crop production, the construction of the food terminal and a tissue culture lab, are the other two major planks of the island's contribution to the CARICOM 25% by 2025 Food Security Initiative to slash the region's massive food import bill.

"The developers submitted changes to the design for the food terminal and they were forwarded to town planning. We are expecting to go ahead with that this year. I have placed them on notice that we would like to see the project started no later than October to make sure we get it up and running," Weir said. "The terminal will package local produce such as sweet potatoes and breadfruit, as well as blackbelly lamb, and we will

have the opportunity to package foods that would otherwise perish. So, it will be a pack house for storage and do packaging," he explained.

The Minister said he will ensure there is no delay in the construction of the food terminal, located at Lears, near the Bridgetown port: "It will store local produce for export but we are also focusing on value added Agri-processing. The Food terminal is near to the highway to the airport."

Weir estimated that construction of the facility, which will store produce from CARICOM countries for export, will take approximately 12-18 months and will be fully functional by early 2026.

He said Barbados is a good location for housing produce from within the region because the island has the highest amount of Caribbean airlift to the U.K. and considerable connectivity to the U.S.

The facility, which will be close to 183,000 square feet, is being built by Novo International, which developed a similar facility in Trinidad and Tobago.

Weir said the Government is inviting investment for the U.S. \$17 million state-of-the-art Abattoir, which will be just over 200,000 square feet. A feasibility study has already been completed.

He also disclosed that Barbados is now equipped to do large-scale production of shrimp. "Through my counterpart in Guyana we were able to get a consultant to do the pilot project, which was successful, proving that we can grow shrimp in Barbados. We now know what the problems will be and were able to address them."

Data from the pilot project will be made available to Barbadians and potential investors interested in large-scale shrimp farming.

The Minister said Barbadians farmers have been introduced to new varieties of root vegetables that are drought resistant.

There was a 44 % increase in cassava



Indar Weir
**Minister of Agriculture,
Food and Nutritional Security**

production, which totalled 850 tonnes in 2023 compared with 560 tonnes the previous year. Sweet potatoes production was up by 34% moving in 2022 from 2,543 tonnes to approximately 3,407 tonnes last year.

"We were having some problems with yams and we introduced clean planting materials for yam, so new varieties of yam are being produced and production increased. Our yam production for 2024 up to the second quarter, is quite high," the Minister reported.

After resolving some challenges, Barbados is also expanding production of cassava, with assistance from Guyana, which is usually facilitated through its international stakeholders - the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation in Agriculture (IICA).

Weir said discussions have been held with the Barbados Hotel and Tourism Association (BHTA) regarding supplying more provisions to cruise ships.

In addition, he would like to see more local pork used in hotels as the island imports "an enormous amount" of pork. Discussions have been held with pork producers to expand production and ensure consistency of supply.

Weir advised that Barbados is also increasing poultry production, including breaded chicken used by the cruise ships, and identified this as another investment opportunity.

Following the provision of 50 shade houses from Guyana, they are being assembled and the Ministry will soon roll out a full project targeting primary and secondary schools, the polytechnic and the community college. “We are also working with the local farmers from our Farmers Empowerment and Enfranchisement Drive (FEED) programme to put them in a position where they can lease these shade houses. The plan is to also market the shade houses to other CARICOM member states.”

He said that greenhouses, also known as freight farms, will address issues related to the climate crisis, in particular, the recent type of hurricanes and storms, and will bring some solution to ensuing flooding that destroys crops. The freight farms will also help to reduce issues such as drought and pest infestation. The Minister reported that he has had

early discussions with a Canadian group to manufacture greenhouses in Barbados, which would be given to people in the urban areas who would otherwise not get involved in farming.

“This provides an opportunity for Barbadians to be enfranchised through obtaining these facilities to grow crops for sale to the food terminal, or directly to the supermarkets or consumers.”

To address the drought problem, the government is funding a water augmentation program, which has been started in two areas, but more investment is needed to expand the irrigation programme. Already, farmers, have special rates for water and have meters connected to the island’s Water Authority.

Weir said an estimated U.S. 5.5 million in investment is needed to build a 28-million-gallon catchment facility.

On the issue of Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) affecting intra-regional trade, the Minister said the Heads of Government are empowered to settle issues affect trading between CARICOM member states.

“We need to be focused on increasing production and building capacity. Barbados has passed legislation covering sanitary and phytosanitary measures.”

He said Barbados is pushing ahead to complete the regional ferry service that will carry produce and passengers between Barbados, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Weir noted that the Government is providing assistance to owners of fishing vessels damaged by hurricane Beryl.

“We are working to make sure that we come as close as possible to the target of significantly reducing our food imports by the end of 2025. Grenada, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Jamaica, whose production capacity was affected by the recent hurricane, may have to revisit their production target dates,” the Minister stated.

He said the CARICOM Ministerial Task Force on the 25% by 2025 is made up of Ministers of Agriculture, which shows the priority being given to the project by the region’s Heads of Government.

Country	Investment Opportunities
Guyana	• Beef production • Mutton production • Poultry production • Livestock feed • Shrimp and fish production • Hatching Eggs • Root vegetables • Coconut production and processing • Spices and Sauces
Barbados	• Mutton production • Pork production • Poultry and chicken nuggets • Shrimp production • Broccoli • Abbatoir • Tissue Culture Lab • Irrigation projects

Food Security Drive Based on Life Sciences Strategy

The International Food Science Center (IFSC), which provides state-of-the-art facilities and technical expertise, is a cornerstone of the food security initiative in Barbados.

"The IFSC empowers local food producers to scale their operations and meet international standards. This not only enhances our food security but also boosts our export potential," the CEO of Export Barbados, Mark Hill explained.

He said the IFSC is not just about increasing production. "It's about promoting sustainable agriculture within our life sciences framework. By developing health and wellness foods and supporting eco-friendly practices, we are ensuring that our agricultural sector remains resilient and sustainable. This is crucial for the long-term food security of Barbados and aligns with our life sciences strategy."

Hill reported that since its launch, the IFSC, which falls under the umbrella of Export Barbados (BIDC – Barbados Investment and Development Corporation), has made significant strides in supporting local producers under its life sciences strategy. "We've helped several small and micro food processors improve their production capabilities, achieve international certifications, and access new markets. The success of our Landship Foods brand, with its specialty sugars and unique sauces, is a testament to the impact of the IFSC and our commitment to life sciences."

He said Export Barbados has ambitious plans for the IFSC as part of its broader life sciences strategy.

"We are integrating advanced technologies like artificial intelligence and robotics to streamline production processes and enhance efficiency. Additionally, we are working towards full Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) compliance and Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) certification, which will open even more international markets for Barbadian products, particularly in the agribusiness and wellness sectors."

Export Barbados is helping local producers scale their operations, enhance product quality and access international markets. The agency is focusing on growth and sustainability in the agriculture and agri-business sectors as part of its national goal to achieve U.S. \$ 1 billion in exports by 2030.

The IFSC is dedicated to empowering local agricultural producers and agri-businesses by offering a range of services designed to enhance their competitiveness. These include technical assistance and training, and access to state-of-the-art facilities, including manufacturing and packaging facilities, which enable small and micro food processors to produce high-quality products at scale, reducing the cost of capital and ensuring compliance with international standards.

Export Barbados also supports research and development activities to foster innovation in the agricultural sector. The agency collaborates with food scientists, designers and chefs to help develop new products and improve existing ones.

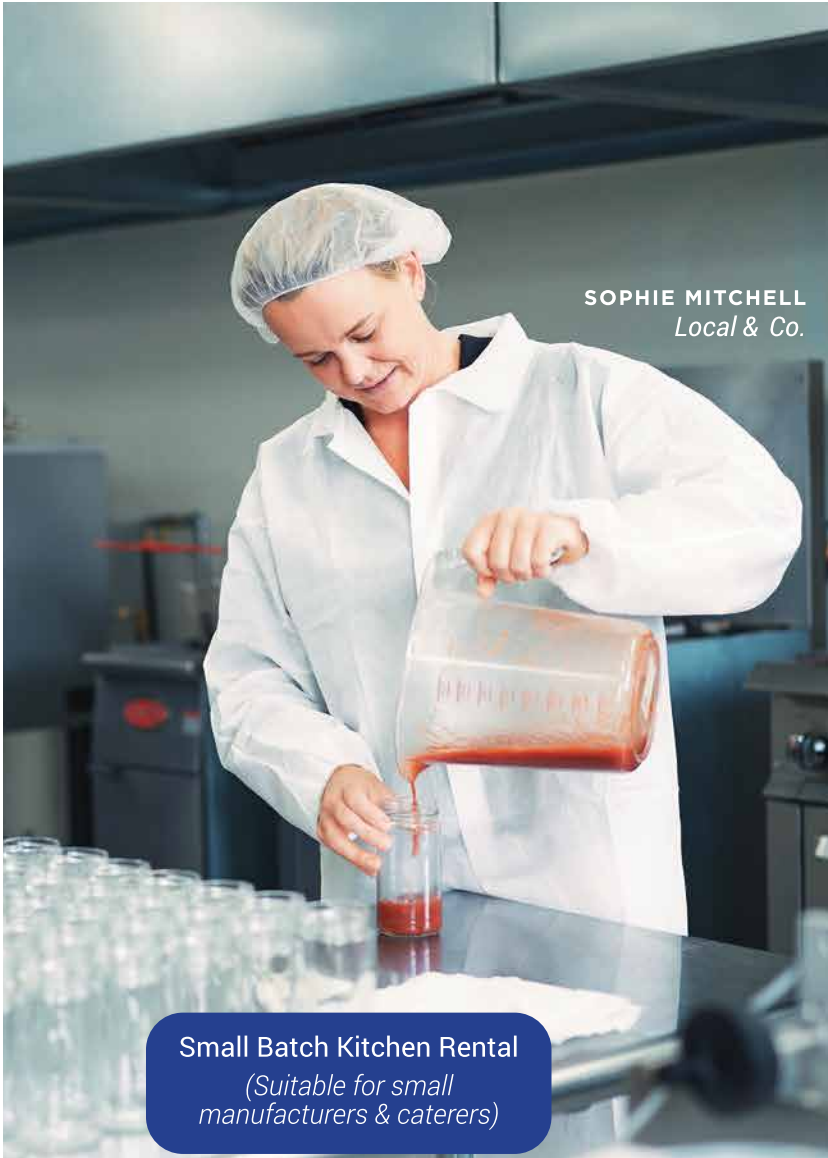


Mark Hill
CEO, Export Barbados

The CEO said the agency is promoting sustainable agriculture focusing on organic farming, eco-friendly practices and supporting the development of value-added products.

"Export Barbados is not only enhancing the export potential of Barbadian agricultural products but also contributing to the overall economic development and food security of the island," Hill stated.

The organization also builds global partnerships to bring financial and technical support to the island's agricultural sector. "Collaborations with countries like India provide grants, machinery, and technical expertise that significantly boost the capacity of local producers. These partnerships ensure that Barbadian agri-businesses have access to the latest technology and best practices, enhancing their competitiveness in global markets," the Export Barbados CEO said.



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The International Food Science Center (IFSC) aims to offer a high-quality food processing facility for microprocessors operating in non-commercial settings. It also serves as a platform for culinary entrepreneurs to refine their products and bring them to market in alignment with international standards.



INTERNATIONAL
FOOD SCIENCE
CENTER

Regional Private Sector Body Addressing Trade and Transportation Issues

The CARICOM Private Sector Organization (CPSO) shares the high level of enthusiasm among regional governments about the 25 % by 2025 initiative to reduce the region's exorbitant food import bill but wants urgent attention to be paid to a range of critical issues that could impact the success of the business investment initiatives.

"We share this view completely. The enthusiasm now needs to be bolstered with accompanying policy changes, many of which are urgent. The recent foray into providing agriculture insurance is a start," Dr. Patrick Antoine, CEO and Technical Director said.

He noted that the private sector organization was assigned the role of identifying the opportunities, using evidence-based approaches, and identifying the required policy actions to address efficient operation of the agri-food value chains among the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME).

Dr. Antoine said the CPSO, which is contributing to the implementation of the CSME, leveraging the full resources of the Caribbean private sector, would like to see more timely decision-making.

"25% by 2025 will mean urgent attention to taking, and implementing, timely policy changes to support private sector investment and boost investor confidence to do more. The CARICOM markets are an oasis of opportunity and will remain so for the foreseeable future," Dr. Antoine said.

The CPSO, which maintains six work streams that include expanding agri-food value chains and facilitating trade in goods, would also like to see the elimination of Non-Tariff Barriers

(NTBs). The other work streams are free movement of labour, enabling business environment, finance and capital markets, and disaster risk reduction and recovery.

Dr. Antoine said the CPSO is completing a review of CARICOM trade, but early results suggest that while some progress has been achieved in a few of the 21 products, identified as constituting potential opportunities, progress has been slow for others, particularly when account is taken of the rapid expansion of tourism and related services post-COVID.

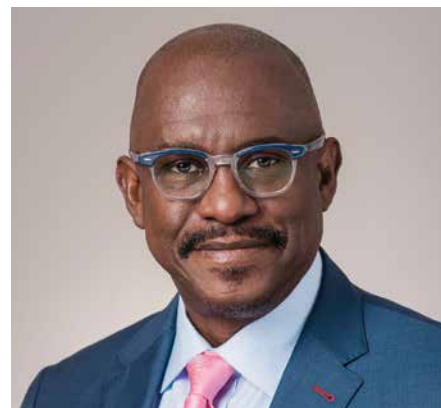
"The far smaller and still recovering agri-food systems in CARICOM, challenged for capital and connectivity, have not been able to respond to post-COVID emergent opportunities as rapidly or at the scale, compared to the global supply and distribution chains."

The CPSO initially identified six categories of current extra-regional imports and one export opportunity from CARICOM, which it said was "low-hanging fruit" that could displace over 11 percent of current imports. It has also identified 19 agri-food investment opportunities.

"There is a substantial space that the CSME agri-food system should be filling and the CPSO's role is to assist them in occupying that space," Dr. Antoine stated.

The organization has submitted to the CARICOM Heads of Government seven priority investment business cases focusing on poultry meat and hatching eggs; animal feed; meat products, vegetables, cassava and coconut products.

In addition, the CPSO was requested by the CARICOM Heads to formulate a private sector response to the



Dr. Patrick Antoine
CEO and Technical Director
CARICOM Private Sector Organization

challenge of transportation in the Southern Caribbean. "The CPSO got to work instantly and provided clear analysis of 'gaps' in the five CARICOM trading corridors; the most feasible routes; infrastructure needs; trade facilitation requirements among Member States within the 'trading corridor'. It will also focus on 'behind the border measures' prerequisites, such as production at scale, consolidation and de-consolidation facilities; critical port investments; vessel requirements; and enabling reforms to make such a maritime service possible."

Dr. Antoine said that the routes that are feasible is the corridor spanning Trinidad and Tobago through the Eastern Caribbean to Barbados and back. Another route is Suriname, Guyana, Trinidad and Barbados. "Such a service can be expanded to other countries, in phases. Opening this route to ferry services will have a tremendous impact on intra-regional trade, consumer-spending on regional products and services, and will strengthen 'people to people' integration in the Community."

Republic Bank Believes Collaboration is Key to Success of Food Security Initiative

Republic Bank, which is providing financial support for the 25% by 2025 CARICOM food security initiative, is encouraged by the collaboration on this project within the region but wants to see a holistic approach to key issues that can have an impact on its success.

"It does seem that there is a greater energy amongst the CARICOM Heads to increase food production, reduce imports, improve the value chain in all aspects across food development, food production and food marketing operations for the region," Stephen Grell, the bank's Managing Director in Guyana advised Caribbean Business & Travel.

He observed that there is also greater interest from the private sector, more entrepreneurial spirit, a willingness to import technologies that have been proven in other regions, and the expansion of different types of crops being cultivated.

The bank has committed U.S. \$100 million for food security projects in the region and in Africa. To date, U.S. \$20 million has been approved for the food security initiative and Guyana has benefitted from approximately U.S. \$17 million, about 80 percent of the financing. Fifty percent of the debt-financing funds were allocated to corn and soya production and the other half to supporting food manufacturing.

Financial assistance for Trinidad and Tobago is spread among several Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) for the production of high-value crops, including lettuce, Kale and peppers, used in restaurants

and hotels.

"As is illustrated in many of other industries and communities that thrive in our region, we believe SME's form an integral part to the success of food security in CARICOM," Grell said.

Noting that agriculture and food production is complicated, Grell said there is need for a greater investment in understanding all the moving parts and a holistic view of the drive to boost food production and reduce the region's import bill.

In particular, he stressed the importance of greater collaboration among units that play a vital role in cross border trade, namely customs departments, port authorities and logistics companies.

The Republic Bank Executive said while improving infrastructure takes time, attention needs to be paid to both physical upgrades and human capital so that there is efficiency in the production, development, packaging and marketing of products. "While we focus on the logistics of roadways and port operations, we need greater investment in human capital to ensure we can improve those areas to ensure food produced can get to source as cost efficient as possible."

Grell recalled that Republic Bank's support for the CARICOM food security project resulted from a meeting he was invited to by Guyana's President Irfaan Ali on how the bank could contribute to this initiative.

He emphasised that the bank's support is geared towards projects that are sustainable and viable.



Stephen Grell
Managing Director
Republic Bank (Guyana) Ltd.

"We would like to see viable long-term projects and long-term solutions that need and can support debt financing, and also a focus on environmental and social aspects to ensure that these projects do not run counter to the environmental commitment we made."

He said Republic Bank regards itself as a catalyst for other financial institutions to come on board and support the 25% by 2025 project.

"We see ourselves as having a critical role to explore opportunities, forge partnerships, and drive economic progress in the region among investors, entrepreneurs, private sector and policymakers," the bank's Managing Director stated.

BMA President Upbeat about Barbados Manufacturing Sector

The President of the Barbados Manufacturers Association (BMA) Rakeesh Bernard said there are several investment opportunities in the manufacturing sector as the country's economy continues on a growth path.

"The future of the Barbados economy is bright. The government supports the private sector and there are a lot of positive indicators to encourage investment and to expand the manufacturing sector," Bernard, the Managing Director of Roberts Manufacturing Company said.

Bernard said an expected increase in exports will be better facilitated when the much-needed expansion of the Bridgetown port is completed by year end.

The BMA is currently finalising a study of the sector's contribution to the island's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and would like to see it increased. Approximately 5,000 persons currently work in the manufacturing sector.

Bernard said the Mia Mottley administration has demonstrated its commitment to the private sector and, among other things, has established a small industrial park specifically to enable small producers to manufacture their products.

The BMA President said one major constraint is supply chain consistency and the heavy dependence on global shipping lines to get products to regional and overseas markets. "Barbadian exporters are at the mercy of the large shipping companies especially in terms of the number of visits to the island and size of container loads."

Bernard said there are opportunities for investment to improve logistics throughout the region.

He pointed to affordable wages and

an excellent banking system in the island as some of the key factors that draw investment to the island.

Bernard said Barbados welcomes investment to manufacture more pharmaceuticals and to expand the apparel sector.

"One of the biggest areas ripe for investment is the agro-processing sector. We are looking not just for capital but also technical expertise."

He believes there is also scope for well-established Barbadian manufacturers to pursue joint ventures with other CARICOM countries.

Bernard said the larger food and beverage manufacturers have the capacity to supply several products to cruise ships that call at the Bridgetown port. These include flour, oil, biscuits, chicken nuggets and tenders, water and juices.

He reported that Barbadian manufacturers have had successful missions to the Dominican Republic and Cuba in the past year and there are opportunities for increasing trade to Jamaica, Belize, Grenada, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Suriname.

"Barbadian manufacturers are also exploring markets in Latin America for products such as margarine and disinfectant spray and to expand exports to the United States and Canada. Some manufacturers have begun exporting to Colombia, Venezuela and Panama," the BMA President said.

Bernard said most of the bigger manufacturing companies are large scale producers and can supply new markets. The BMA is providing assistance to the smaller cottage industries to address scale of production and consistency in quality.



Rakeesh Bernard
President
Barbados Manufacturers Association

He said the CARICOM 25% by 2025 Initiative to reduce the region's massive food import bill is "a fantastic project" to which the BMA is contributing. The association completed a project to demonstrate how food waste can be used as animal feed.

Bernard said he is pleased with the "important role" the relatively new Caribbean Manufacturers Association (CMA) is playing. The regional association recently mediated on the issue of Front-of-Package Labeling. Regarding Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs), which have been a bugbear in intra-regional trade for many years, he said these have been minimal recently. "We have come a long way. Issues are usually now resolved amicably."

The Barbados Trade and Innovation Expo, which replaced the well-known BMEX trade show, is being recalibrated and will be held in 2025, with a launch scheduled before the end of this year.

World Trade Center Guyana Geared to Grow Enterprises and Exports

As Guyana's rapidly growing economy is spurring the expansion of the agriculture, agribusiness, light manufacturing and the tourism and hospitality sectors, the World Trade Centre Georgetown, Guyana (WTCG) is offering a wide range of valuable assistance. There is a special focus on micro, small and medium sized enterprises that lack access to mechanisms that can effectively help to grow their businesses.

"We have ready access to thousands of businesses and institutions, importers, investors, suppliers, training institutions, government agencies, legal and regulatory expertise and support services through the WTCA network around the world which other organizations and agencies may not have," WTCG Executive Chairman Komal Samaroo, who is Executive Chairman of Demerara Distillers Limited (DDL) said. DDL was awarded the exclusive license for the WTCG because of its global footprint through its El Dorado brand of rum, its impeccable record of financial profitability and its visionary approach to expansion and investment. DDL's subsidiaries are Demerara Shipping, Tropical Orchards Products Company (TOPCO), Distribution Services Limited and its interests in Diamond Insurance, and Demerara Bank.

The Guyana WTC, which will be housed at the company's former head office building currently being upgraded and retro-fitted, will be drawing on the resources and expertise of more than 300 World Trade Centers in over 100 countries. The entities, which offer services ranging from language translation, market access for exports, to hands-on training in various levels of trade facilitation and negotiations, will be able to identify and recommend available goods and services needed in Guyana.

While the WTCG itself will generate about 20 jobs, its support of local businesses will help to grow these



World Trade Center Georgetown Executive Chairman Komal Samaroo (at left) and Executive Director, Wesley Kirton with World Trade Center Association General Counsel, Jim Perry at World Trade Center Association headquarters, New York.

enterprises, thereby generating many additional jobs.

The WTCG will offer state-of-the-art office and conference facilities for leasing in a highly safe and secure building. A duty-free shop and a business club will also be in the building.

Guyanese and other Caribbean businesses will benefit from the numerous MOU's signed with Canada, India, Colombia, Panama, China and Ghana. The most recent MOU was competed with the World Trade Centre Miami.

"Benefits of collaboration include short and medium-term training for local entrepreneurs in skills such as trade documentation preparation, legal and other requirements for exports to traditional and non-traditional markets and affordable access to events such as the Food and Beverage Show of the Americas organized by the WTC Miami," WTCG Executive Director Wesley Kirton advised.

"We can help identify reliable suppliers who can provide not only the most appropriate and cost-effective equipment, but will also commit to after-sales service," he explained.

Kirton reported that initial conversations have begun with

private sector organizations in Guyana as the Center intends to have meaningful collaboration with them on an on-going basis.

"Some of these organizations were part of an event we held in February to discuss the impact of events in the Red Sea and the Panama Canal on the supply chain to Guyana," Kirton said.

The WTCG will complement work being done by other agencies such as Caribbean Export and local investment and trade promotion agencies in the region.

In addition to securing and signing MOUs, over the past few months the WTCG has been engaged in several activities to make valuable connections, such as an engagement in Washington DC. This included U.S. Government officials, including the State Department and the U.S. Trade Representative, as well as key members of Congress, in collaboration with the Institute of Caribbean Studies (ICS) and the World Trade Center Washington DC.

2025 is expected to see an intensification of the WTCG's work, which will include workshops and conferences; lectures, training programs, and more business-to-business engagements globally.

Caribbean Export to Develop and Showcase More Investment Packages

The new Executive Director of the Caribbean Export Development Agency, Dr. Damie Sinanan, has identified sustainable agriculture, digital transformation, green economies and investment attraction to boost global competitiveness as the main areas of focus under his leadership.

Dr. Sinanan made a smooth transition to the helm of the agency, having served for the past ten years as the Manager of Competitiveness and Export Promotion. Prior to joining the agency, he had significant roles at Export TT in Trinidad and Tobago and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). "Through strengthening existing partnerships and building new ones, we aim to be the leading project execution agency for private sector development," Dr. Sinanan told Caribbean Business & Travel.

The Barbados-based Agency will be providing more investment packages at the 2025 Caribbean Investment Forum (CIF), one of the agency's flagship annual events. For the CIF in Guyana in July this year, the agency was able to package seven projects, with a capital requirement of close to U.S. \$60 million, double that provided at the CIF in 2023.

"With assistance from the Caribbean Development Bank, the agency is working towards a project packaging facility to present more bankable and shovel-ready projects to aid with investment attraction and project preparation," the Executive Director disclosed.

Caribbean Export has actively supported Caribbean exporters in accessing new markets, more recently, through strengthening ties with Africa. Trade missions to Ghana and Nigeria focused on cooperation in renewable energy, agriculture and AgTech, and ICT including fintech.

The endeavour with Africa has been strengthened with the signing of an MOU with the African-Export Import Bank (Afreximbank). "Deepening Africa-Caribbean trade relations is underway, but requires continued effort, particularly in engaging the private sector and addressing logistical challenges. The creation of an African-Caribbean Business Council and the establishment of direct air and sea links are also critical next steps in this evolving partnership."

Dr. Sinanan said the 25% by 2025 initiative isn't just a goal but a necessity for the region's food security and noted that Caribbean Export, through the CIF, has emphasized the need for environmentally sustainable and climate-resilient agricultural practices.

"By promoting investments in sustainable agriculture technologies and practices, the CIF aims to boost food security, create jobs, and open new export opportunities while preserving the region's rich biodiversity. Initiatives such as precision farming, organic agriculture, and the use of biotechnology have been discussed as means to enhance productivity and sustainability."

Enhancing compliance with global standards is one of the key areas under the continuing Regional Private Sector Development programme, Global Gateways, funded by the European Union (EU) to the tune of 12 million Euros (approximately U.S. \$13.5 million).

As part of its strategy going forward, Caribbean Export will prioritize women and youth entrepreneurs across its programming

The Executive Director said Caribbean Export is actively involved in the EU-LAC (European Union-Latin



Dr. Damie Sinanan
Executive Director
Caribbean Export Development Agency

America and Caribbean) partnership to strengthen ties particularly in areas such as digital transformation, sustainable development and energy security.

Caribbean Export recently signed an MOU with the Caribbean and U.S.-based Pleion group for its ferry service, with the aim of enhancing regional trade logistics. "This partnership focuses on improving supply chain efficiencies, reducing trade barriers, and increasing the competitiveness of Caribbean products in the global market. The collaboration with the Pleion Group Inc. reflects Caribbean Export's commitment to working closely with private sector entities to drive economic integration and improve the region."

The agency has also signed an MOU with the Caribbean Association of Investment Promotion Agencies (CAIPA) and will host some joint investment promotion events.

Caribbean Tourism Investment Opportunities Highlighted in Investment Guide

A wide range of investment projects available in the region's tourism and hospitality sector are featured in the 2024 edition of the Caribbean Tourism and Hospitality Investment Guide, a publication of the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) Scholarship Foundation.

The fourth edition of the Investment Guide, highlights investment opportunities in 21 CTO member countries and recent new investments in the sector across the region.

"We feel strongly that this important publication that focuses on identifying investment opportunities, is a critical tool for the members of the CTO. Prospective companies interested in the development of the Caribbean tourism and hospitality industry can secure information on infrastructure development including airport and seaport upgrades as well as hotel development and expansions. This resource is also very valuable to high-net-worth individuals with a desire to invest in the region," Chairman of the Foundation, Jacqueline Johnson said.



CTO Secretary-General Dona Regis-Prosper and Sandra Ann Baptiste, Chief Executive Consultant of Carigold Signature, display the Investment Guide.

The Investment Guide, produced by Florida-based Carigold Signature, was made available to the region's tourism ministers attending CTO's "Caribbean Week" events in June in New York.

"The Caribbean has substantial investment potential. In the hospitality and tourism sector, opportunities abound in areas such as medical and sports tourism, conference hosting, cruise homeporting, ferry services, and yachting. These sectors represent niche or emerging markets ripe for growth," said CTO Chairman, Kenneth Bryan, who is the Minister of Tourism and Ports in the Cayman Islands.

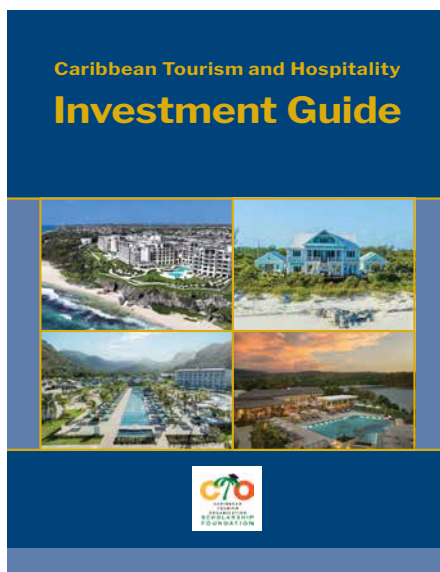
The Investment Guide is distributed to targeted business organizations and executives as well as Disapora leaders in New York, Florida and Toronto. It is also available at the annual Caribbean Hotel Investment Conference and Operations Summit

(CHICOS), which is being held this year in Barbados from November 13-15.

"In addition to international brand name properties, several countries welcome investment for more boutique hotels and eco-lodges, marina facilities, theme parks and entertainment centres, medical, wellness and sports tourism projects, cultural tourism and agri-tourism initiatives," said Sandra Ann Baptiste, Chief Executive Consultant of Carigold Signature, who is the Editor of the Investment Guide.

She said several governments have recently enhanced their package of investment incentives, upgraded infrastructure and expanded airlift to their destinations.

Recent investments highlighted in the publication include Wyndham Grand Barbados Sam Lord's Castle, Sandals Saint Vincent, Hotel Indigo in Grand Cayman and St. Kitts, Six Senses in Grenada and Best Western in Guyana.



Barbados to Showcase Investment Opportunities and Tourism Industry at CHICOS

The 13th Caribbean Hotel Investment Conference and Operations Summit (CHICOS), scheduled to be held in Barbados from November 13-15 at the Wyndham Grand Barbados – Sam Lord’s Castle, is poised to deliver substantial benefits to both the hotel sector and the island’s economy.

According to Minister of Tourism and International Transport, Ian Gooding-Edghill, hosting over 300 delegates and investors will provide a significant impetus to the island’s hospitality industry, resulting in heightened bookings and increased visibility for local hotels and accommodation providers.

“This influx is expected to catalyze long-term partnerships and unlock new avenues for investment. Furthermore, CHICOS will showcase Barbados’ compelling appeal as a destination for future tourism projects, potentially driving a wave of new developments and enhancements in our tourism infrastructure,” Gooding-Edghill said.

He said in addition, the global exposure garnered from CHICOS will bolster Barbados’ standing as a leading destination for Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) and this elevated profile will attract future major conferences and events to Barbados.

“Delegates will have the rare opportunity to engage deeply with Barbados’ distinctive investment landscape, forge meaningful connections with local enterprises, and acquire a nuanced understanding of the island’s vast potential.”

Gooding-Edghill advised that among the projects to be highlighted are the Bridgetown Transformation at the UNESCO World Heritage Site, Bridgetown and its Garrison that will



***Ian Gooding-Edghill
Minister of Tourism and
International Transport***

feature seven development zones to host 12 sites for hotel development.

“The project will expand the economic base and coordinate a redevelopment process that seeks to transform the area to a city of diversity, operating 24/7 blending commerce with culture, heritage, sports and traditional tourism, accommodation and entertainment.”

Gooding-Edghill said Barbados will also promote The Carlisle Bay Development, which covers over 2 km of beachfront land and is a unique tourism investment project that will feature an iconic performing arts/conference facility and 5 new hotels with 1500 rooms.

Opportunities for investment for entertainment facilities, and medical and dental tourism, and the island’s attractive package of incentives, will also be highlighted during CHICOS.

Updates will be provided on several other projects, including at Needham’s Point, Jemmotts Lane, Pierhead, Kensington Oval and Government Headquarters.

“We are dedicated to making CHICOS a landmark event that is both a transformative event for investment



***Parris Jordan
Chairman, CHICOS***

professionals and an unforgettable journey through the unparalleled allure of Barbados,” the Minister said.

“The 2023 event in the U.S. Virgin Islands was a great success. This year’s event will be in partnership with Barbados Tourism Marketing Inc. in order to present the opportunities on the island, along with showing off the hospitality and culture,” said Parris Jordan, HVS Executive who is the Chairman of CHICOS.

Attendees at CHICOS will network and will discuss the region’s markets and possibilities while analyzing the most important trends that can impact their investment decisions.

“CHICOS is responsible directly and indirectly for significant hotel acquisitions and development deals since its inception over 12 years ago. By bringing together various hotel investors and major decision makers - hotel owners, developers, government ministers, prime ministers, presidents, governors, hotel brand executives and lenders - numerous deals have been completed by delegates that conducted business at CHICOS,” Jordan said.

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CTO Secretary-General Committed to Improving Airlift and Expanding Membership

By Gail Bindley-Taylor

Boosting airlift in the Caribbean is among the top priorities for Dona Regis-Prosper, the Secretary-General and CEO of the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) as she leads the 25-member Barbados-based organization into 2025.

"We realise that airlift is really the lifeblood of the industry and we are determined to keep the focus on it, but we recognise that we have to do so in partnership with the airlines, in partnership with other industry bodies and in partnership with the various governments," Regis-Prosper told Caribbean Business & Travel.

She said the regional tourism development agency also recognises the need to understand the trends in travel, to use solid data for decision-making and be able to provide its members with that data, so that they could make individual country decisions, as well as decisions on the regional level.

The new Secretary-General comes to the CTO with a diverse background having worked in both the public and private sector, bringing over two decades of extensive experience in strategic management, financial management, business and product development and marketing to the regional development agency.

Prior to leading the CTO, she was the General Manager of the Antigua Cruise Port. She also served as CEO of Tortola Pier Park in the British Virgin Islands and as Business Development Director of the Margaritaville Caribbean Group in Jamaica.

Regis-Prosper disclosed that the CTO has established an airlift subcommittee and created a survey

to determine the priorities and challenges facing its diverse member states on the issue of increasing airlift. "What are the short-term requirements? What are the longer term requirements? Is it connectivity, is it customer service, is it airport facilities, is it taxes? So, we are doing that research, and the idea is to build on that research and keep airlift and connectivity at the forefront of what we do."

She said the agency was working closely with both its European and Canadian partners to ensure that momentum continues in those important source markets and there are plans to visit London and Toronto, and to attend an event in Latin America in October. "Traditionally in the Caribbean, we have tended to look upwards when we thought of our source markets but there is significant potential and opportunities in Latin America, in South America and also in Africa."

On the tourism industry's performance, the CTO Secretary-General said there has been significant progress post the 2020 pandemic. "Most of our destinations are projecting increases and despite the short-term setbacks that we have had with Hurricane Beryl, we still see those increases coming through."

The CTO reported that the Caribbean attracted some 32.2 million tourist visits in 2023, some 4 million more than in 2022. Though the region has done well in terms of recovery, Regis-Prosper, who said some markets need to work hard to get back to their pre-pandemic levels, expressed optimism about their future as those markets are doing better than two years ago.



Dona Regis-Prosper

The first female head of the CTO indicated that the organization is also looking to diversify its efforts to get more visitors into the region by approaching ferry operators, both new and existing operations, as it seeks to promote connectivity and multi-destination travel by both air and sea.

She advised that Community Tourism is one of the initiatives being developed and promoted by the regional agency as it looks to boost intra-regional travel. "It is one thing to bring vessels into the port but we need to ensure that we offer various products and facilities along with service standards to maximize the revenue from this important industry." She also wants to see initiatives to improve the guest experience and convert a percentage of cruise passengers to stay-over guests.

Regis-Prosper is committed to expanding research capabilities at CTO to better serve the tourism needs of the region, including more data on market intelligence and forecasting.

She added that the research could include getting feedback on exactly what cruise passengers are willing to spend their dollars on when in ports.

The Caribbean tourism leader said one of the main takeaways from last April's Caribbean Sustainable Tourism Conference was that the Caribbean needs to focus on investing in green technology, green jobs, promoting green initiatives, and working as partners, if it was going to impactfully address the issue of sustainability. The conference also underscored the need to work more closely with non-traditional partners, such as those in agriculture, fishing, manufacturing and health.

The CTO recently embarked on a "reimagine exercise" to discover what the market is looking for, before it attempts changes to its branding. "I think it has to go through the right process and bring in the right players into the entire discussion including potential customers, the various generations whether it is Gen Z, Gen Y, Gen X or the Baby Boomers. We need to conduct a full-on study before we get to changing or launching a new logo. But we do know that the Caribbean brand is so strong when it comes to travel and tourism and we need to build on that."

Regis-Prosper said CTO will collaborate with the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA), a key partner, on various projects such as advocacy, research, customer service and driving demand. "We will work with them to showcase Brand Caribbean so we could boost demand for the region."

The CTO leadership has been having discussions on expanding its membership while ensuring its current membership is well served by strengthening existing relationships and product offerings within the organization.

The CTO has had meetings with Puerto Rico and has also reached out to the Dominican Republic and Aruba on the Dutch side and is looking to



From left at Caribbean Week in New York are Peter Mayers, Director USA, Barbados Tourism Marketing Inc. (BTMI); Dona Regis-Prosper, CTO Secretary-General & Chief Executive Officer; Hon. G.P. Ian Gooding-Edghill, Barbados Minister of Tourism & International Transport; Jose Freig, Vice President, International Operations, American Airlines and Andrea Franklin, Chief Executive Officer of BTMI.

establish contact with Guadeloupe on the French side. The organization has welcomed the return of Bermuda and the USVI and is engaging with destinations which have never been CTO members and others which were once members but may have shifted their focus during the pandemic.

The CTO has also made significant strides in bringing on board strategic allied members and partners. "One of our recent additions was Chukka Caribbean Adventures out of Jamaica and they have a presence in several of the other destinations. In addition, Tropical Shipping recently came on as one of our sponsors for our Youth Congress and that's significant because Tropical Shipping is a shipping line and they've always been very good supporters of tourism, so when I speak of non-traditional and strategic partners Tropical Shipping is one of those and I have only just begun."

Described as a transformational leader, Regis-Prosper attributes her success to her ability to listen to stakeholders and reflect their aspirations. She also believes that having actually lived in four different Caribbean countries has given her a very different approach to tourism:

"While I am from St. Lucia, I also went to school in Trinidad so I spent some time there. And I lived in the British Virgin Islands, Jamaica, Antigua, and in Barbados, so that background helped me understand business at different levels, understand community at different levels and understand how to communicate at different levels."

Her vision for the organization is to see a tourism industry that brings financial benefits to the economies of the region, has a positive impact on the Caribbean environment, cultivates and preserves its culture and enriches its people. "I just want to see a 360 benefit to tourism where we engage in meaningful projects, meaningful initiatives, measurable achievements. We cannot forget that for us to have an industry that we can pass on to the future generations we have to build resilience."

Gail Bindley-Taylor, a Communications Specialist, who served at the United Nations for many years, is a former broadcaster and Caribbean media manager.



Caribbean Hospitality Leader Confident of a Bright Future for Tourism Industry

by Kristine De Abreu

Patricia Affonso-Dass, a leading and highly respected Caribbean hotel executive, is confident that despite challenges, the region's tourism industry has a bright future and will record consistent growth as it becomes more competitive and innovative.

She has over 30 years of experience in the hospitality industry and was awarded the 2024 Caribbean "Hotelier of the Year" by the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA) for her exceptional leadership and dedication.

Affonso-Dass called for a renewed focus on developing a regional marketing campaign that promotes the Caribbean brand and recommended eliminating or reducing taxes and other upfront charges on airline tickets and streamlining and simplifying immigration and customs procedures in the region. She suggested that these measures would improve the affordability and enhance the desirability and ease of movement throughout the region, especially for sporting and music events.

The Caribbean hotelier, who has lived in Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Barbados and Antigua and Barbuda, said these steps would also address the growing trend of travellers wanting to have richer experiences in multiple destinations in the regions that they visit.

The hotel executive stressed the importance of marketing the Caribbean as a diverse but unified region. "We need to be far more coordinated as a region in terms of our messaging, focusing our efforts not just on highlighting the fact that we are one region but on showcasing our wonderful diversity – music, culture, geography, cuisine and history." She elaborated: "A well-crafted and executed regional marketing initiative

could significantly boost the region's tourism industry, improve overall economic development, enhance global brand identity, increase regional tourism arrivals, enhance visitor spend, and provide the region a stronger voice in international tourism organizations and platforms."

She said post-COVID-19, Barbados has seen steady and consistent growth with increasing visitor arrivals reaching pre-pandemic levels. BHTA occupancy figures indicated average hotel occupancy between January to June at approximately 69%, approximately two percentage points above the same period in 2023.

"Tourism performance for winter 2023 into early 2024 was strong across the sector, bolstered by improved seat capacity from key source markets and more attractive ticket prices," said Affonso-Dass who has headed the national tourism associations in Guyana and Barbados and is now CEO/Group General Manager for the Ocean Hotels - O2 Beach Club & Spa, Sea Breeze Beach House and The Rockley.

The Barbados Central Bank has reported that the tourism sector experienced vigorous growth, with a record 17.9 percent increase in long-stay arrivals. It highlighted that the U.S. remained the fastest growing source market, while Canada and CARICOM markets also recorded impressive increases. Although the U.K. market experienced a slight decline, it still maintained a strong performance, 14 percent higher than 2019's peak. Revenue per available room (RevPAR) rose by 11 percent relative to 2023 for hotels.

"All these numbers indicate a strong performance for the first half of 2024, and the continued importance of the tourism and hospitality industry to the economy of Barbados," said



Patricia Affonso-Dass

Dominican-born Affonso-Dass.

She pointed to a marked increase in airlift in 2024 with new carriers like Frontier Airline, service from Delta and United, and existing partners like American Airlines increasing its gateways to Barbados with flights from Charlotte, North Carolina and expanded service from Newark, New Jersey and Washington Dulles. Additionally, both British Airways and Virgin Atlantic will offer double daily service from the U.K. from October 2024 to support the upcoming winter season.

Affonso-Dass recommended a review of the role and contribution of the cruise industry to the region's tourism sector. She would like to see the cruise industry be a more engaged partner and with a greater focus on ways to improve on shore spend, reducing environmental impacts, improving sustainability practices, and delivering a greater economic impact. She also urged individual governments to ensure a more equitable fee and taxation structure when compared to land-based visitors. Affonso-Dass said Barbados continues to be a desirable location for regional and foreign investors. "Barbados offers the potential investor a stable political environment, excellent infrastructure, significant and growing airlift from all key source markets, a

strong legal framework, good medical facilities, telecommunications, safety and security, and a largely well-educated and skilled work force. There are also attractive incentives.”

The Past President of the CHTA and current Board member of the Barbados Hotel and Tourism Association (BHTA) identified opportunities for a wider range of investment projects in Barbados. “I believe that Barbados would benefit from investment in more innovative hotel offerings across all segments of the market, from luxury to budget, creative health and wellness projects, eco-friendly and environmentally sensitive/ green activities and accommodation offerings that take the focus ‘beyond the beach’, and provide options more specifically geared towards today’s more nomadic, active, experientially hungry and environmentally sensitive traveller,” Affonso-Dass commented.

Highlighting some of the island’s new investments, she pointed to the 28-room Blue Monkey Hotel & Beach Club and Hotel Indigo with 132 rooms, scheduled to open in 2025. Pendry Barbados Luxury Resort with 74 rooms, and the 232-room Royalton Luxury Resort are both scheduled to open in 2026. The Hyatt Ziva, whose opening date is yet to be announced, will have 380 rooms and 40 condo units.

Affonso-Dass said that she understands that there are also additional large-scale investment opportunities on the Sam Lord’s Estate, Carlise Bay development project and the Pierhead Development Project.

She said the Caribbean’s natural resources and beauty continue to be attractive to travellers and investors. “There is a growing demand for eco-tourism, wellness tourism and immersive experiences, heritage and cultural experiences and travellers are desirous of reducing their footprint and environmental impact on the places that they visit. I am heartened to see a growing number of projects in islands like Dominica, Grenada,



Patricia displays her CHTA award with Karolin Troubetzkoy, Executive Director, Marketing and Operations of Anse Chastanet and Jade Mountain Resorts in Soufriere, Saint Lucia.

Guyana and Aruba, that have a strong focus on environmental sustainability, and that across the region this is becoming more of a focus.”

“I am proud that Barbados for many years has been a leader in providing a combination of beauty, economic growth, innovation and an attractive environment for investment,” The Barbadian hotelier added.

Affonso Dass has continued to advocate for increased and improved training throughout the region, recommending emotional intelligence training, language training, diversity training, exchange programs with other hospitality organisations in different countries, as well as immersion training. She highlighted the language training program facilitated by the BHTA and hosted by the Venezuelan embassy in Barbados, which provides language training for hotel workers, particularly in Spanish, to appeal to and cater for visitors from Latin America.

Affonso-Dass has also supported revamping the curriculum in degree-level courses offered at the University of the West Indies and stressed the need for reforms in the curriculum of the local hospitality schools to better align with the demands of travellers and the tourism industry

of today. One of the hotels she manages, O2 Beach Club & Spa, was recognised as the Assessment Centre for National and Caribbean Vocational Qualifications.

While President of CHTA, she established the CHTA Young Leaders Forum (YLF), which focuses on developing leadership skills in the hospitality industry, providing networking and mentorship opportunities with esteemed professionals from all over the region, and offering valuable workshops for future leaders.

“Patricia’s commitment to service and excellence is unmatched. Her leadership has not only elevated Ocean Hotels Group but has also positively impacted the wider Caribbean tourism landscape,” Renée Coppin, BHTA Chairman, remarked at the awards ceremony for The Caribbean Hotelier of the Year Award, one of the most prestigious accolades granted by CHTA.



Kristine D’Abreu is a Trinidad and Tobago-based Communications Specialist.

It's Better in the Bahamas

by Mark Stevens

I first visited the Bahamas many years ago, accompanied by forty-five teenagers.

In an earlier life I was a high school band teacher and I'd brought my student musicians to Nassau for a music festival and several performances.

We played a concert at Rawson Square in downtown Nassau, a crowd of mostly Bahamians forming the audience. After the final selection they rose in a standing ovation and clapped enthusiastically.

Two days on the island and already I'd bonded with the folks who called these islands home.

At the time two thoughts continuously cycled through my brain.

First, I was struck by the Bahamians' joie de vivre.

The second thought had been infesting my brain since long before we even touched down here.

Anticipating that first visit here I'd taken particular interest in an advertising campaign overtaking the airwaves back in Canada. It extolled the Bahamas' appeal: images of alabaster beaches, colonial architecture, turquoise seas, Bahamians celebrating a local festival called Junkanoo.

A jingle accompanying these visuals become a melody I played over and over in my head – for weeks at a time before we arrived, for the entire duration of that first visit.

I've since returned to the Bahamas four more times and even nowadays the words (and melody) of that simple tune haunt me, expressing a truth I've since discovered time and time again.

The text of that irresistible ditty? "It's better in the Bahamas."

IT'S BETTER IN NASSAU

During our most recent Nassau visit my wife Sharon and I choose the



Great place for the weekly pig roast: Nipper's Beach Bar on Great Guana Cay in the Abacos

sprawling resort of Baha Mar for our home base.

Encompassing three different hotels (the SLS, Hyatt and Rosewood), Baha Mar is a vacation destination in its own right.

We splash and slide in Baha Bay, the onsite water park. We lounge beachside before discovering the greens on the Jack Nicklaus signature Royal Blue golf course, we lob balls on one of many tennis courts – both grass and clay. We visit the onsite art gallery, considering an art lesson, though the allure of ESPA spa proves too appealing to miss.

We try our luck at the Caribbean's biggest casino in the Hyatt, we dine at several of the nearly three dozen restaurants, doing haute cuisine seafood at Marcus Fish and Chop House, going Mediterranean at Cleo. But irresistible though the delights of Baha Mar may be, we soon choose to further explore Nassau itself.

We stroll Bay Street, stopping at the Straw Market for local arts and crafts, browsing world-class stores for fashion and jewelry, we take in the august colonial masterpieces of architecture like the coral-painted Government House.

We visit Fort Charlotte west of the city before stopping at Fort Fincastle and descending the Queen's Staircase, an engineering marvel built by six

hundred enslaved persons.

We sample local rum at a distillery called John Watling's, housed in an elegant colonial great house (a setting that was film set for part of a James Bond movie called "Casino Royale"), before taking in a delightful lesson introducing us to Junkanoo, a Bahamian must-do.

At the Educulture Junkanoo Museum, a labor of love for curator Arlene Nash-Ferguson, we get another taste of that joie de vivre I'd found so appealing years before.

Guided by Nash-Ferguson herself, we're introduced to the roots of this festival, from sample costumes to interactive displays, a lesson in both history and culture.

Each year on Boxing Day and New Years' Even the streets of Nassau come alive with African-inspired music and the Bahamas' own answer to Carnival.

But Junkanoo's hardly limited to Nassau.

IT'S BETTER IN THE ABACOS

On the last night – New Years' Eve – of our first visit to the Abacos in the Bahamas' northerly reaches, my wife and I book a bayside resort in the historic village of Hopetown, a delightful oasis guarded by the postcard-worthy candy cane lighthouse.

As the old year becomes new, we're entertained by a fireworks display over the harbor, the sky transformed into a rainbow of color.

Shortly after midnight we join a conga line of visitors and Bahamians alike, dancing and clapping to the rhythms and melodies of a band clad in African-influenced regalia.

Welcome to Junkanoo.

But this celebration is hardly the Abacos' only appeal.

Visit Man'o'War Cay and stroll the village streets past colonial buildings and learn about the history of local boatbuilding. Browse the shops or hit a beach you'll share with no one; snorkel off a reef mere yards from shore.

Go north to Green Turtle Cay and explore New Plymouth, a whole village of history.

The back-story of the Abacos is both fascinating and unique. It was settled by United Empire Loyalists, so much of the architecture is quintessential New England.

Marvel at the Cape Cod style homes scattered through the islands though these masterpieces are painted lemon and lime and coral and periwinkle.

Dance away a Sunday afternoon on Great Guana Cay at Nippers, a rainbow-coloured bar and restaurant perched cliffside above a pristine beach, before sampling the gustatory delights of the weekly pig roast.

On our last visit to the Abacos we charter a sailboat, inviting friends from home, thrilled to share these islands with them.

As we sail toward Marsh Harbour, our final waypoint, we're joined by a trio



A perfect Nassau place to dine — seaside at Compass Point Resort Restaurant.

of dolphins cavorting beside the boat. I look at my friend Ed, shouting over the sound of the wind.

"It really is better in the Abacos, isn't it?" "The best," he yells in reply. "The very best."

IT'S BETTER IN THE EXUMAS

Given the allure of the Abacos I was understandably unbelieving when, researching another upcoming sailing trip, I was regaled with tales of the delights of the Exumas.

Until we arrived.

For all the hustle and bustle of Nassau or the historical delights of the Abacos, the Exumas are the ideal place to get away from it all.

Lest you wonder whether it's better in the Exumas consider this: John Travolta, Nicholas Cage and Johnny Depp all own private islands here.

Think a year's worth of islands and cays stretching north from Great Exuma itself (the most populous island in the chain). Make your way north to Little Exuma, continue north to a collection of Robinson-Crusoe-worthy islands, some completely uninhabited.

At Warderick Wells, in a protected area called Exuma Cays Land and Sea Park, we encounter nurse sharks circling our chartered sailboat, we visit Allan's Cay populated only by iguanas, we go ashore at Norman's Cay and dine at MacDuff's, a casual and rustic eatery where we're the only guests.

Book an Exuma excursion and swim with pigs or nurse sharks, snorkel a fascinating cave system called Thunderball Grotto, yet one more filming location for yet one more James Bond movie.

Or simply feel that ultimate island vibe and do nothing. Find a beach to call your own and your day will just get better and better.

IT'S BETTER IN THE BAHAMAS

On our last Nassau night on our last Bahamas visit, my wife and I savor a final perfect sunset at the Sunset



Exploring ashore in the Exuma Cays Land and Sea Park.

Beach Club in Nassau's west end.

Here, as we await our dinner order of conch fritters followed by the catch of the day, I sip a Kalik beer (so named for the sound of cowbells that were an omnipresent accompaniment to Junkanoo).

I savor the growing twilight and allow myself a few moments of complaisance before the realization hits me.

Despite our numerous visits, we've barely scratched the surface.

Something like seven hundred distinct islands here, scattered across an area of 100,000 square miles of the Atlantic.

We've visited a mere two dozen.

We have yet to do Eleuthera and Harbour Island – with that pastel-painted architecture reminiscent of Hopetown. We have yet to experience the laid-back ambiance of Andros. We have yet to bond with Bimini.

At first humbled, I soon take solace in another reality.

I know that one day we'll return because one thing is certain.

It really is better in the Bahamas.

Photo: Sharon Matthews-Stevens

Mark Stevens is an award-winning Canadian travel writer and past Co-President of the Travel Media Association of Canada (TMAC).



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Love

Fan Favorites Return to 2024 Barbados Food and Rum Festival



U.S.- based Chef Renee Blackman



Barbadian Chef Javon Cummins



International Chef Michael O'Hare

Barbadians and visitors to the island will be delighted to see the return of fan favorites The Breakfast Beach Party and the Liquid Gold Feast as well as the introduction of the Bajan Fair at the 2024 Food and Rum Festival from October 24-27.

Also making a comeback are Oistins Under the Stars, Chef Classics, the Junior Chef Cook-Off Competition, Culture of Cuisine Talks, Rum Route, and Journey of Food.

CEO of the Barbados Tourism Marketing Inc, (BTMI) Andrea Frankin said the Barbados Food and Rum Festival is much more than an opportunity to savor world-class cuisine and exceptional rums.

"It's a celebration of our rich cultural heritage and a testament to Barbados' culinary excellence. This festival brings together the best of our local and international culinary talents, offering an immersive experience that highlights the heart and soul of Barbadian hospitality. It's an essential event for anyone looking to connect with the true essence of Barbados and indulge in unforgettable culinary delights."

The premium all-inclusive Breakfast Beach Party features exquisite breakfast cuisines, rum cocktails, and unforgettable entertainment while

The Liquid Gold Feast red carpet event will showcase award-winning chefs and mixologists, offering premium cocktails, tantalizing cuisine, and enthralling entertainment.

For Oistins Under the Stars, Oistins Bay Garden comes alive for an evening of culture, entertainment, and mouthwatering Bajan cuisine officially kicking off the Barbados Food and Rum Festival under the stars. Grilled fish, delicious cocktails, and a sprinkle of the best Barbadian entertainment create the perfect recipe for a top-tier fish fry.

World-renowned Chefs Chef Michael O'Hare from the United Kingdom, Renee Blackman from the USA and Chef Wandile Mabaso from South Africa, will provide best-kept recipes and insider tips at the Chefs Classics.

Barbadian chefs being featured are Ann-Marie Leach, Damien Leach, Javon Cummins, Trevon Stoute, Marvin Applewhaite, Nicholas Ifill, Adrian Cumberbatch, Kara Riley, Shanese Phoenix, Sean Miller, Tremaine Reece, Stephanie Sayers and Creig Greenidge.

Under the theme "Feed the Future," the Junior Cook-Off competition aims to inspire the next generation of Barbadian cuisine with the return of the Junior Chef Cook-Off Competition. With higher stakes and bigger prizes.

Ten contestants will go head-to-head in the most anticipated cook-off event.

The Journey of Food allows attendees to enjoy unique dinner experiences with world-renowned chefs at some of the island's best restaurants while Rise and Rum includes rum shop hops, rum distillery tours, tastings, and samples.

The Bajan Fair promises non-stop fun, laughter, and delicious food, featuring thrilling rides, delectable dishes, and exciting games. Attendees can look forward to a cheerleading competition, a secondary school chanting competition, live entertainment, and a variety of local foods for sale.

The 2023 Barbados Food and Rum Festival was a remarkable success, earning international recognition as the Best Culinary Festival in the Caribbean at the World Culinary Awards, a sister event to the World Travel Awards that honors excellence in the travel and culinary industries globally.

The festival attracted over 4,000 attendees across all events, with signature events like "Rise and Rum: The Breakfast Beach Party" and "Liquid Gold Feast" selling out weeks in advance.

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With the wide variety of cuisine and over four-hundred exquisite restaurants across the island, it's no surprise Barbados is often referred to as the culinary capital of the Caribbean. Regardless of how you decide to tantalise your taste buds, be sure to wash your meal down with a revitalising cocktail, fresh from the birthplace of Rum.

Barbados has year-round options for foodie enthusiasts however, the Food & Rum festival is the culmination of Bajan cuisine. Described as the 'Ultimate Foodie Dream Weekend', the Barbados Food and Rum Festival is a mecca for foodies all over the world, where Barbados' finest culinary talent is celebrated.

visitbarbados.org/usa

BARBADOS

Barbados: the Destination with Something for Everyone!

by Zahra Spencer

Whether it's your first trip to Barbados, or you're a seasoned visitor to these beautiful shores, you'll quickly discover that Barbados is a place you want to return to, time and time again. The true magic of this tiny, easterly island that locals proudly describe as "the gem of the Caribbean Sea", is that it feels both familiar and fresh. The warmth of its people, the tastiness of its food and its vibrant, energetic culture will always make you feel right at home—but you'll also see that the island is a dynamic one, constantly evolving, so each visit is never the same as the last.

We like to say Barbados has a place for every kind of traveler—the foodie, the thrill-seeker, the historian, and of course, the beach lovers! It's a family friendly destination and the perfect romantic getaway for lovebirds. Whether you're traveling for business or pleasure, Barbados truly has something for everyone—keep reading to discover more about why your next getaway should be to Barbados!

Where to eat:

What's a vacation without lots of delicious eats? Well luckily, Barbados has plenty options, no matter your palette or price point!

No trip to Barbados is complete without a visit to Oistins fish fry on a Friday night. Located in the heart of Barbados' primary fishing village, Oistins, the weekly Friday night fish fry is a festive night out, complete with music, karaoke, and of course, plenty of food! There are plenty of stalls, with vendors serving typical Bajan fare, like rice and peas, breadfruit, macaroni pie and of



Visitors enjoying the Friday night Oistin's Fish Fry

course, all kinds of fish! And speaking of fish, make sure to grab a traditional Bajan fish cutter from Cuz's fish shack by Pebbles Beach—it's one of the highest rated spots on Trip Advisor!

Also located on the south coast is Worthing Square Food Garden where you'll find a fully stocked outdoor bar, plenty of seating and a variety of food trucks, with every kind of cuisine, from Asian to Bajan and much more! The Village Bar at Lemon Arbor is a great option to experience traditional Bajan food in one of our famous rum shops, and Cocktail Kitchen in St. Lawrence Gap is a favorite of locals and tourists alike! Zemi Café is a standout dining option if you're looking for delicious eats and a tranquil view of the stunning east coast of Barbados.

For more formal dining options, enjoy restaurants like Changers and Primo on the south coast, and QP Bistro, Tides, The Local and Co., and the Bearded Rose on the idyllic west coast of the island!

Where to stay

Barbados has three main coasts where visitors typically stay, and they each have a different sort of character. The south coast of the island is energetic, vibrant and fun. It's ideal for those who want to be in the heart of where all the action is! There are lots of accommodation options for those looking to stay in that area from all-inclusive hotels to Airbnb and guest houses. The Rockley is one such hotel that is in a prime location, directly across from Accra beach and within walking distance of many restaurants and shopping options, and is just outside the heart of the capital city, Bridgetown!

If you're looking for a more luxurious experience, the west coast of the island, also known as the 'platinum coast' might be more your speed. It is home to a number of luxury villas and hotels, many of which are frequented by celebrities when they visit the island. If you want to golf on some of the most exclusive courses

and dine at the finest restaurants the island has to offer, all while staying at a luxury resort, then the west coast is perfect. Finally, the east coast of the island, home to the famous ‘Soup Bowl’ and the Scotland District, is well away from the hustle and bustle. It’s a nature lover’s dream, with scenic views and lots of open-air spaces. It is ideal for travelers who are truly hoping to ‘go off the grid’ during their vacation. It’s a great area to stay if you’re into surfing, wellness retreats, hiking and other outdoors activities!

Where to shop

You won’t lack for shopping options when you’re in Barbados, even if you’re only looking for a souvenir or two! Pelican Village in Bridgetown is an excellent option for local fares such as artisanal candles, pottery and other handmade items. Haymans Market located in a refurbished sugar plantation in Speightstown, St. Peter, is one of the newest shopping experiences in Barbados. It’s a great spot to shop, dine and even enjoy live entertainment. The stores at Haymans are all locally owned with everything from jewelry to locally sourced perfumes!

If a luxury shopping experience is what you’re after, Limegrove Lifestyle Center in Holetown is home to many of the high-end brands like



Guests sampling rum at Mount Gay Distilleries



Tourists exploring Harrison's Caves

Bvlgari, Breitling, and Michael Kors, as well as local luxury boutiques and delicious cafes.

Where to play

While we’re known for our amazing sun, sea and sand, there’s so much more to Barbados than just the beach—but of course, that should be your first stop! Beach clubs like Copacabana and the Boatyard are great places to spend the day where you can relax on beach chairs, enjoy watersports and grab a bite when you get hungry. For an exciting water adventure, book a Cool Runnings catamaran tour and sail along the coast of Barbados, with stops along the way for a quick dip or to swim with the turtles!

Harrison’s Cave, one of Barbados’ most stunning natural wonders, will amaze you. After all, how often do you get the chance to explore an underground cave? Located at Chukka adventure park, Harrison’s Cave isn’t the only thing to do! Go ziplining, try your hand at the obstacle course, visit the aviary and enjoy a delicious lunch at the onsite restaurant!

Of course, you can’t spend time in the birthplace of rum without a rum tour! The Mount Gay Rum Distillery tour is an excellent option to sample a variety of local rums and learn more about the history and heritage of rum

in the country of its birth.

And of course, be sure to keep some dates in mind, because Barbados is home to so many world-renowned festivals! From July to the first week of August, experience Crop Over, also known as the sweetest summer festival! Then in October, mark your calendars for the ultimate foodie dream weekend: the award-winning, Barbados Food and Rum festival, coming up this October 24-27, 2024. Then we close out the year a little differently, with the Caribbean’s biggest marathon weekend, Run Barbados, December 6-8, 2024. It’s perfect for every fitness level, with distances ranging from a mile to a full marathon!

This is just a taste of everything there is to do in Barbados! It’s the perfect getaway no matter the kind of experience you are after and I’m afraid words simply can’t do this beautiful island justice—which means you’ll simply have to book a flight and come see for yourself!

Zahra Spencer is a Barbados-based Travel Writer.



Caribbean Perspectives Book on Regional Issues Launched

Guyana's President Irfaan Ali recently launched "Caribbean Perspectives", a publication that chronicles major developments in CARICOM for over thirty years.

The author is a former Caribbean journalist and specialist in Caribbean Affairs, Sandra Ann Baptiste, who is the Chief Executive Consultant of Florida-based Carigold Signature, which specialises in consulting, communications and training.

Both President Ali and CARICOM Secretary-General Dr. Carla Barnett lauded the efforts of the author for putting together a comprehensive account of the early days of the regional integration movement with an extensive collection of articles from 1980, one-on-one interviews with many regional leaders as well as material from radio and television broadcast programmes.

"Caribbean Perspectives" features the views of seventeen Heads of Government from across the region, business icons and civic leaders. Included in the publication are interviews and features with Guyanese Presidents Dr. Cheddi Jagan and Donald Ramotar; Barbadian leaders Sir Errol Barrow, Sir Bernard St. John and Sir Erskine Sandiford; Prime Ministers Michael Manley and P.J. Patterson of Jamaica, Dominica's Dame Eugenia Charles, St. Lucia's Sir John Compton and Sir James Mitchell of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

The book, launched at the Cheddi Jagan Research Centre in Georgetown, has articles which focus on the pace of integration, key integration issues, intra-regional trade concerns, strengthening regional links, national social and economic issues and tourism developments.

There is a section with CARICOM Secretaries-General Edwin Carrington and Roderick Rainford, two Presidents

of the Caribbean Development Bank, William Demas and Sir Neville Nicholls, and Commonwealth Secretaries-General Sir Shridath Ramphal and Chief Emeka Anyaoku.

"There are few better placed or informed to drive this task than Sandra Ann Baptiste, a committed regionalist with whom I have had the pleasure of sharing information and views since my earliest days in the engine room of the integration movement at the CARICOM Secretariat in the 1970s," Carrington said in a message to mark the launch of the publication.

Rainford said Caribbean Perspectives is a highly commended historical document that will be of great interest to all who have followed the history of regionalism in the Caribbean. "The enormous task of producing these reports for over thirty years required tremendous research and is quite a labour of love that tells the story of the ebbs and flows of regional developments over that period."

The author said the book was produced to inform students across the region about developments in the earlier days of CARICOM, which recently marked its 50th anniversary.

She presented copies of the book to the librarians of the University of Guyana and the Guyana National Library and said the publication will be made available to the University of the West Indies and public libraries across the Caribbean.

In her address, Baptiste recommended that CARICOM leaders read the



President Irfaan Ali displaying the publication with CARICOM Secretary-General Dr. Carla Barnett and author Sandra Ann Baptiste at the book launch.

foreword in the publication written by former CARICOM Assistant Secretary-General Byron Blake, who assessed the state of the regional integration movement.

The author suggested that Caribbean Heads of Government listen to the people of the region to find out how they feel about CARICOM. "It is time for CARICOM leaders to consider a mini-West-Indian Commission." She said they should also participate in call in radio and television programmes well in advance of the annual Heads of Government Summits to feel the pulse of the people on CARICOM.

Baptiste, who called for another CARICOM Tourism Summit, also said there is a need for both hassle-free and affordable intra-regional travel so Caribbean people can become familiar with other countries and people in the region.

She stressed that for regional integration to be strengthened, there needs to be a stronger relationship between the Caribbean media, the CARICOM Secretariat and the region's leaders.

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Meetings Incentives Conferences Exhibitions

Properties



02 Beach Club

Meeting Rooms: 2

Square Footage: total 1900 sq. ft.

Guest Rooms: 116

Special Features:

Acqua Spa

O2 Beach Club's award-winning Acqua Spa offers personalised wellness journeys that begin the moment the lift doors open. Located on the eighth floor, the full-service spa is the highest on the island with unrivalled breathtaking panoramic views of the sparkling Caribbean Sea through floor-to-ceiling windows. O2 Beach Club & Spa guests and visitors can relax and let the fragrance of beautiful aromatic blends, views of the clear blue sea and sounds of the ocean transport them to a more serene state of mind.

Oro Restaurant

O2 Beach Club's ninth-floor Oro Restaurant quite literally takes your dining experience to new heights, offering an a la carte menu of modern European-meets-Caribbean fusion with stunning 260-degree views of the South Coast. Oro Restaurant is air-conditioned, a rare find in Barbados, it is open five nights a week and is beautifully designed and opulently decorated.

MEMORABLE MEETINGS *in paradise*

There are many reasons to **plan your event here in Barbados**, as we **expertly cater to your every wish**, whether a small executive retreat or large incentive group. Enjoy discounted room rates (for 40 room nights or more), as well as special concessions such as:

- Private Group Check-In
- Daily pre-stocked mini-bar
- Complimentary WiFi
- Beach bag and bottle of champagne on arrival
- Spa credit and/or discounts off spa services



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CLUB** & SPA

Cara Lodge

Meeting rooms: 2

Square footage

Ballet Room: 930 sq. ft.

Woodbine: 888 sq. ft.

Guest rooms: 34

Special Property Features

- Cara Lodge Hotel is a historic boutique wooden hotel in central Georgetown. It offers guests a unique blend of colonial charm and modern comforts.
 - Our Bottle Restaurant completely encapsulates Guyana's rich and varied history and culture, serving local and international cuisine.
 - Tailored, attentive service for every guest.
-

Herdmanston Lodge

Meeting rooms: 1

The Ogle Room

The restaurant room (Sucre Room) is used for evening functions from time to time.

Our Cane View Terrace and Garden are used for smaller outdoor functions. The flamboyant lawn is our larger outdoor space with a capacity for 250 persons

Square footage

Ogle Room: 1200 sq. ft.

Flamboyant Lawns: 1500 sq. ft.

Guest rooms: 24

Special features

- An intimate heritage hotel with distinctive colonial architecture located in Queenstown, a quiet residential neighbourhood.
- Great City location – a seven-minute walk from the National Park and the Seawall overlooking the Atlantic Ocean.
- Sunday Brunch with a wide variety of popular local dishes.
- Personalized guest service.

CARA LODGE HOTEL

A HERITAGE HOUSE SINCE 1840



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Duke Lodge

Meeting rooms: 2

Square Footage: 2,100 sq. ft. each

The Symposium, a Banquet & Conference facility located within the compound of Roraima Duke Lodge, can accommodate in excess of 100 persons on each floor.

Guest rooms: 14

Special Features:

- Duke Lodge, Hotel, Restaurant and Bar is a historic and prestigious Home, with 24-hour gated security, located in Kingston, across the street from the U.S. Embassy in Duke street.
 - The property, which has a 40 ft swimming pool, offers highly personalized and friendly service.
-

The Jamaica Pegasus Hotel

Meeting rooms: 15

Square Footage: total of 15,000 sq. ft.

Guest rooms: 300

Special Features:

- The property can accommodate business events for up to 1,000 people. There is a strikingly designed banquet hall, several boardroom-style meeting rooms and lush gardens – an outstanding venue for al fresco receptions.
- Each of the conference rooms includes air conditioning and cutting-edge audiovisual facilities, as well as blackout capabilities for video presentations. There are personalized catering options, from invigorating coffee breaks to multi-course Jamaican-themed banquets.
- The Pegasus Gardens offers an additional 7,000 sq. ft. suitable for weddings, receptions and cocktails.



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Both rooms are situated on the expansive grounds of the luxurious **Spice Island Beach Resort**, Grenada's only locally owned AAA Five Diamond resort. World-class Food and Beverage catering options are available for both rooms. Whether you are hosting an executive retreat, private client lunch, dinner or cocktail, this is the ideal address for the discerning business event.

Call 1-473-444-4258 or email sales@spicebeachresort.com for rates or to book your event today.

Koi Resort Saint Kitts, Curio Collection

Meeting Rooms: 3

Largest Conference Room: 4,922 sq. ft.

Total Event Space: 6,353 sq. ft.

Largest Conference Room: 4,922 sq. ft.

Guest Rooms: 102

Royal St Kitts Hotel & Casino

Meeting Rooms: 1

Total event space: 5,000 sq. ft.

Guest Rooms: 185

Ramada by Wyndham St. Kitts Resort

Meeting Rooms: 3

Total Event Space: 2,500 sq. ft.

Guest Rooms: 273

Bird Rock Beach Hotel

Meeting Rooms: 3

Total Event Space: 2,700 sq. ft.

Largest Conference Room: 1,000 sq. ft.

Guest Rooms: 46

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New Features and Record Attendance at Caribbean Week

Held under the 35th anniversary theme “Connecting the Globe, Celebrating Diversity” the Caribbean Tourism Organization’s 2024 ‘Caribbean Week’ attracted a record turnout and introduced a number of new and signature events, including the Women’s Leadership Awards.

CTO Secretary-General Dona Regis-Prosper said she was pleased with the support and attendance at Caribbean Week at the InterContinental Times Square in New York from June 16-21.

“I was also happy with the presence of the various ministers and the various Directors of Tourism that lead on the national level. I was impressed with the information that we were able to share through our industry partners and all of the workshops. We took some time to honour and celebrate our media partners. They are very important in terms of telling the story of tourism and promoting the destinations on our behalf,” Regis-Prosper said.

She was also upbeat about the well-attended Business and Tourism Marketing Symposium. “We used that opportunity to highlight our allied members because again we recognize the importance of bringing the private sector and the public sector in the same room for discussion and creation of business opportunities on both sides,” said Regis-Prosper who managed Caribbean Week for the first time.

There were presentations and discussions on the impact of AI on the tourism industry and relations with the cruise line sector. Connectivity in the region was examined at the Caribbean Airlift Forum.

Other topics covered included service excellence, enhancing connections between New York City and the region, multicultural marketing, travel trade relations, public relations, crisis communications, and smart



CTO Chairman, Kenneth Bryan, Minister of Tourism and Ports in the Cayman Islands, Joel “Big Bird” Garner and Barbados Minister of Tourism and International Transport, Ian Gooding-Edghill.

destination management.

Chairman of the CTO Board of Directors Rosa Harris, who played a key role in organizing the week’s events, highlighted various aspects of the CTO’s recent progress.

Special awards were presented at the “Caribbean Queens: Saluting Women Shaping the Future of Caribbean Tourism” Breakfast & Awards.

“Celebrating Caribbean Queens was something that I produced. It was the first time where we gave peer awards to various Directors of Tourism, where Directors of Tourism chose other Directors of Tourism to provide them with leadership awards. And we also had at the ministerial level as well as the Director’s level,” Regis-Prosper said.

The Secretary-General’s Award for Excellence went to Beverly Nicholson-Doty, a former USVI Commissioner of Tourism and a former CTO Chairman.

Valerie Damaseau, Commissioner of Tourism and Culture for Saint Martin, received Minister of Tourism top honors while Petra Roach, CEO of the Grenada Tourism Authority, was awarded Director of Tourism for the year.

The impactful work of the CTO Foundation and the recently launched Jean Holder Scholarship were also highlighted during Caribbean Week.

A signature event of the week was the ceremony to honor former West Indies fast bowler Joel “Big Bird” Garner, attended by CTO delegates, members of the media and Caribbean Diaspora at the Caribbean-owned and operated S’Aimer NYC.

The Barbados Tourism Marketing Inc. (BTMI) supported the event and watch party at which patrons watched a live stream of the ICC Men’s T20 World Cup in the Caribbean.

Caribbean Week New York



Grenada's Minister of Tourism, Adrian Thomas with CEO of the Grenada Tourism Authority, Petra Roach.



Paul Strachan, Executive Director, Global Communications in The Bahamas Ministry of Tourism, Investments & Aviation and Anita "Patty" Johnson, General Manager Communications (USA).



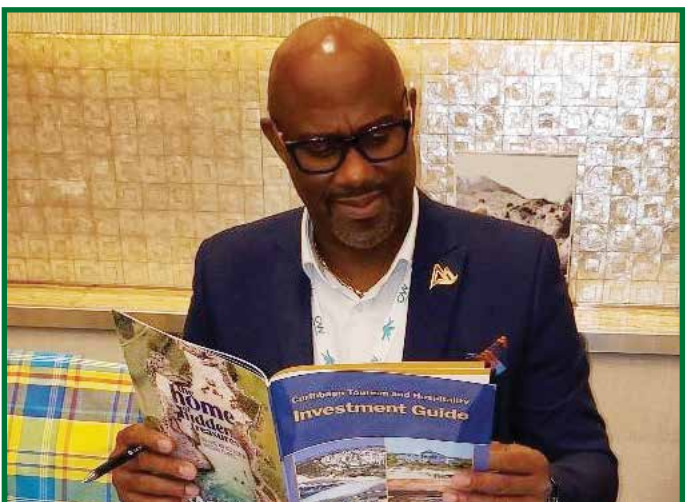
Antigua and Barbuda's Minister of Tourism, Civil Aviation, Transportation and Investment Charles Fernandez, answering questions during the Media Marketplace.



Barbados Tourism Marketing Inc. (BTMI) CEO Andrea Franklin with BTMI Director USA, Peter Mayers.



Turks and Caicos Minister of Tourism, Environment, Heritage, Maritime, Gaming and Disaster Management, Josephine Connolly and Permanent Secretary, Wesley Clerveaux.



Dexter Peril, Head of Marketing at the St. Lucia Tourism Authority, checks out the new edition of the Caribbean Tourism and Hospitality Investment Guide.



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